



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mark Grisanti

Grisanti Calls on Assembly to Immediately Pass “Public Assistance Integrity Act”

MARK GRISANTI February 24, 2014

| ISSUE: **SOCIAL SERVICES**



New York State must show the federal government, through legislative action, how it is going to prevent welfare fraud and abuse from EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) cards. If the state does not act, New York will stand to lose more than \$120 million in federal Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF). The deadline is Saturday, February 22.

“Since Sheldon Silver and the Assembly have failed to act on legislation to cut down on fraud and abuse in the welfare system, the state is now in jeopardy of losing \$120 million in federal aid,” said Grisanti. “The Assembly must immediately act on this legislation when they return to Albany next week.”

Grisanti has co-sponsored, and the State Senate has passed, the “Public Assistance Integrity Act” (S966) for the past three years. The legislation passed by the Senate would cut down on the flagrant abuse of EBT cards by prohibiting welfare recipients from using cash assistance to purchase tobacco, alcoholic beverages, and lottery tickets. It would also prohibit recipients from withdrawing funds at liquor stores, casinos, and strip clubs.

“We cannot jeopardize \$120 million in federal funding that could help needy families across the state,” said Grisanti. “At a time when we are trying to lower taxes and create relief for taxpayers, losing this much money in federal aid would be a big blow to the state. In addition, that \$120 million budget gap would have to be made up by the taxpayers. That is unacceptable, and is an insult to the hardworking, overtaxed people of New York State.”

While the deadline is tonight at midnight, Senator Grisanti is hopeful, should the Assembly should choose to act on this legislation, that the federal government will grant the state an extension of the deadline.

New York spends over \$2.7 billion each year administering Cash Assistance. Currently, state law does not place limits on how or where EBT cards can be used.